ARE YOU EFFECTIVELY WATERING YOUR LAWN?

Did you know that watering your lawn consumes almost half of the water used by most homes during the warmest months of the year?

To water most efficiently, follow these general rules:

Most of us tend to water too frequently and leave the sprinklers on too long. Turf studies have shown that most lawns only need to be watered once every three days to stay healthy and green. To determine how long you should water your lawn, perform the following test:



- Set three to five flat-bottomed cans or coffee mugs at various places on your lawn half way between the sprinklers or in areas that generally receive the least water. For very large lawns, more than three cans may be required.
- Turn on your sprinklers for 15 minutes.
- Measure the depth of the water in each can or mug; then determine the average water depth of the containers.
- Consult the guide below to determine how long to water your lawn every third day. (A typical "every third day" schedule means that you might water Sunday, Wednesday, Saturday, Tuesday, and Friday over a two-week period.)

Total minutes of watering time (every third day)

Average depth	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
in cans (Inches)	(March 15-May 14)	(May 15-Sept. 14)	(Sept. 15-Nov. 14)	(Nov. 15-March 14)
1"	6 minutes	9 minutes	6 minutes	(Water only
3/4	" 8 minutes	12 minutes	8 minutes	during extended
5 / 8"	10 minutes	15 minutes	10 minutes	dry periods)
1 / 2"	12 minutes	18 minutes	12 minutes	
3 / 8"	16 minutes	24 minutes	16 minutes	
1 / 4"	24 minutes	36 minutes	24 minutes	
1 / 8"	48 minutes	72 minutes	48 minutes	

As a reminder, the ground is like a sponge. To make sure that it can absorb all the water your lawn needs, divide your total watering time into two or three periods. For example, if your lawn requires 18 minutes of watering, don't water once for 18 minutes; instead, water three times for six minutes each.

Depending on your soil type, you may need less or more water than indicated above. There are basically three different soil types: clay soils, sandy soils, and loam soils. To begin with, clay soils absorb water slowly but retain the water for a long time. Apply water slowly and more infrequently than what's listed in the guide. (Santa Clara County soil is primarily clay, and you may consider adding some calcium sulfate to improve drainage and aeration.) Secondly, sandy soils absorb water quickly and also drain quickly. Apply water faster and more often than what's listed in the guide. Finally, loam soils absorb water well, has good drainage, and retains enough water for good plant growth. Apply water at a moderate rate, or follow the guide pretty closely.

There are many other steps you can take to have a more water- and money-friendly lawn. For example, the purchase of an automatic underground sprinkler system is a wise and efficient investment for you and your lawn. Furthermore, if you clean your sprinkler heads, check all parts of the system periodically to ensure they are functioning properly, and set your automatic system for optimal times to water then you should have an efficient watering system. In closing, we can all do our part to keep our lawns beautiful and conserve water at the same time.

For more information call the City of Santa Clara Water & Sewer Utility at 615-2000, stop by the utilities office at City Hall at 1500 Warburton Ave., or visit the website at santaclaraca.gov/pub_utility/ws_conservation_programs.html